

Message Text

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ACTION IO-13

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 0923

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: TGEN, UN (RAMACHANDRAN, ARCOT)
SUBJECT: INDIA CANDIDATE FOR SYG POST, DR. ARCOT RAMCHANDRAN

REF: 77 USUN 0094

1. GENERAL ASSESSMENT: RAMACHANDRAN, IN HIS CAPACITY AS SECRETARY, DEPT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, PLAYS A VITAL ROLE IN FORGIN FORMAL S&T LINKS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES INCLUDING THE U.S. HIS DEPT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR OVERALL COORDINATION IN THE FIELD OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY.

2. AS SECRETARY OF THE DOST, HE HAS THE RESPECT OF HIS STAFF, KNOWS HOW TO MAKE HARD DECISIONS, AND IS A CAPABLE MANAGER ON THE SCALE AT WHICH HE HAS HAD TO FUNCTION. THE DOST HAS BEEN SLOW TO RECRUIT STAFF BUT HAS RECRUITED CAPABLE PEOPLE. FROM AN OUTSIDER'S VIEW, HOWEVER, HE DOES NOT SEEM FORCEFUL OR VIGOROUS IN MEETINGS OR PERSONAL RELATIONS. HE DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE "POLITICAL" IN TERMS OF ESTABLISHING HIMSELF AS THE CRITICAL POLICY PERSON INVOLVED IN SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL WORK IN A BROAD ECONOMIC-POLITICAL FRAMEWORK IN INDIA. RATHER HE HAS SEEMED TO BE PRIMARILY A BUREAUCRAT, A TECHNICIAN, AND AN ADVISOR RATHER THAN A LEADER. IN THESE CAPACITIES HE HAS DEVELOPED THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF HIS DEPT IN NEW AREAS SUCH AS REMOTE SENSING, ENVIRONMENT, AND OCEANOGRAPHY AND HAS BUILT APPROPRIATE SUPPORT
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FOR THESE ACTIVITIES IN OTHER MINISTRIES. HE APPEARS TO HAVE HAD SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT FROM AND TO BE PERSONALLY LIKED BY MANY SENIOR OFFICIALS AND INDIAN CABINET OFFICERS WITH WHOM HE DEALS. WE ARE LESS CONFIDENT, HOWEVER, THAT RAMACHANDRAN HAS THE PANACHE AND POLITICAL SKILL TO DEAL WITH LARGE NUMBERS OF HIGHLY POLITICAL DELEGATIONS AT A WORLD CONFERENCE ON AS SENSITIVE AND COMPLICATED A SUBJECT AS THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY CONF-

ERENCE. ON THE OTHER HAND, RAMACHANDRAN HAS BEEN GREATLY INFLUENCED BY HIS AMERICAN SCIENTIFIC EDUCATION AND HAS GREAT RESPECT FOR U.S. SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENTS. WE HAVE FOUND HIM PARTICULARLY FRIENDLY AND EASY TO WORK WITH. HE IS CERTAINLY FRIENDLY TO THE U.S. ALTHOUGH INDIAN INTEREST IS HIS PRIMARY CONCERN.

3. BACKGROUND: RAMACHANDRAN REPORTS DIRECTLY TO THE PRIME MINISTER. HE IS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND A MEMBER ALTERNATE CHAIRMAN OF THE INDO-US SUBCOMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY. HE IS MEMBER AND FELLOW OF SEVERAL FOREIGN SOCIETIES INCLUDING THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERS. HE IS ALSO ON THE EDITORIAL BOARD OF THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HEAT AND MASS TRANSFER AND RECEIVED A DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD FROM PURDUE.

4. HE WAS BORN ON APRIL 6, 1923 IN MADRAS (TAMIL NADU). HIS LATE FATHER DR. MUDALIAR WAS A VICE CHANCELLOR OF MADRAS UNIVERSITY. AFTER OBTAINING A BACHELOR OF ENGINEERING DEGREE FROM THE COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING, UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS IN 1943, RAMACHANDRAN STUDIED AT THE PURDUE UNIVERSITY AND RECEIVED A MSC IN MECHANICAL ENGINEERING IN 1947 AND PHD IN 1949. HE RETURNED TO INDIA TO ORGANIZE THE POST GRADUATE COURSE IN POWER ENGINEERING AT THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE (I.I. SCI), BANGALORE. LATER HE WENT TO GLASGOW TO WORK FOR YEAR IN THE RESEARCH LABS OF M/S PEBCOX AND MILCOX. FROM GLASGOW HE WENT AS A POST-DOCTORAL FELLOW TO COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY ('55-'56) AND SPENT THE FOLLOWING SUMMER SESSION AT MIT.

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5. HE RETURNED TO INDIA IN 1957 TO HEAD THE DEPARTMENT OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERING AT THE I.I.SCI AND HELPED ORGANIZE A POST GRADUATE PROGRAM IN FOUNDRY SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING AND MACHINE DESIGN. HE IS AN AUTHORITY ON HEAT TRANSFER PROBLEMS. IN 1966, HE ALSO BECAME THE HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL MANAGEMENT AT THE I.I. SCI. IN 1967 HE WAS APPOINTED DIRECTOR OF THE WEST GERMAN SUPPORTED IIT/MADRAS. MANY OF THE FACULTY AT IIT/MADRAS HAVE EXPRESSED GREAT CONFIDENCE AND SUPPORT FOR HIM TO THE SCICOUNS. HE ALSO NEGOTIATED THE GIFT BY THE WEST GERMANS OF THE MULTIMILLION DOLLAR IBM COMPUTER JUST BEFORE LEAVING THE IIT.

6. WIDELY TRAVELLED, RAMACHANDRAN HAS AN INCISIVE MIND, IS VERY CURRENT IN HIS OWN SUBJECT AREA AND IN LATEST TRENDS IN R&D ON ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF ENERGY. HE HAS TAKEN A PERSONAL INTEREST AND IS KNOWLEDGEABLE ON COAL GASIFICATION, PIPELINE TRANSPORT OF COAL, SOLAR ENERGY, AND REMOTE SENSING. WHILE SOFT SPOKEN, HE IS ARTICULATE, HAS A KEEN SENSE OF OBSERVATION AND OF PER-

SONAL AND NATIONAL PRIDE. HE IS VERY FRIENDLY AND
APPROACHABLE. HE IS MARRIED AND HAS TWO SONS. ONE IS STUDYING
IN GRADUATE SCHOOL IN CANADA
SCHNEIDER

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